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NOTE. The following report was prepared by the Acting Publications Procurement Officer, Paris, who has served for approximately four years in INR/CS/FP as Coordinator for Publications Procurement in Western Europe. This report discusses the responsibilities, the actual and potential importance, and the operating problems of the Publications Procurement Officers in London and Paris. The report does not undertake to evaluate the performance of individuals; it is a discussion of functions.

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DATE: 10/10/68 RE: PUBLICATIONS

COMPARISON OF A PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH THE POSITION OF
PUBLICATIONS PROCUREMENT OFFICER, PARIS

This report is addressed to the consideration of the
initiative proposed by Inspectors Philip B. Sprague and
Robert M. Marr to abolish the position of Publications Pro-
curement Officer, Paris, and to assign the duties of that
Officer to the PPO, London. Their proposal was made following the
recent inspection of the Embassy, Paris, and is contained in
paragraph five of the Inspectors' comments on the Publications
Procurement Program, dated September 5, 1961. The paragraph reads:

"Although the Inspectors will review this point further
during the forthcoming inspection of the Embassy in London, where
there is also an American Publications Procurement Officer, it
appears that a single officer could give adequate supervision
to both of these offices, permitting the abolition of one or both
two American positions. In view of growing concern about the
American presence in Paris it would appear that the supervisory
functions might be assigned to London and the Paris position
abolished."

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

The position of PPO were established in London and
Paris in 1954 in order to enable the Department of State to
coordinate the activities of the Publications of the United

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States Government in the field of foreign publications procurement. Procurement for the Department itself has been, and remains, an important function of these offices,

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Over a period of fifteen years, these two positions have consistently demonstrated their value to Washington, to the embassies where they are located, and to the other posts. In the past, they have been considered for possible elimination as an economy measure, but have always been found to be justified by the services performed.

II. THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE PUBLICATIONS PROCUREMENT PROBLEM.

Under present conditions of major world-wide political and economic readjustment, and particularly because of the mounting East-West tension, the need for current and background information from all available sources is acute. Two of the best

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sources are London and Paris. Except Moscow, where there are two PPO's, they are the largest publishing centers in the world, and their publications cover virtually every geographic area and subject. Both are major centers of the international book trade, and as such are valuable channels for the acquisition of foreign publications not available in the country of origin.

The situation in other posts is less reassuring. In recent years, the Soviets have liberalized their publications policy, but there remain difficulties and restrictions in obtaining important publications and in shipping from Moscow; also, the Soviets may see fit to increase these difficulties and restrictions at any time. Other sources for Soviet publications are essential. Berlin has been one of them, and also the major source for East German publications, but the recent crisis there has reduced the flow. PPO, Berlin has been checking the possibility of getting Satellite subscriptions and books through Vienna, Bern, Helsinki and Stockholm. Recently, the Department asked both London and Paris to investigate the availability of East German serials. Thus these latter posts are important not only for their current production, but as a safeguard against difficulty elsewhere.

III. THE PPO FUNCTION IN PARIS.

A. GENERAL.

The importance of Paris as a source of publications not available in the country of origin has been mentioned above.

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Soviet publications, Paris has been second to Moscow for many years. Paris was the principal supplier of Bulgarian publications prior to the opening of the Legation in Sofia, and remains a useful source. Paris is the principal supplier of publications from Albania, and a ^{significant} principal supplier of other Satellite publications. Paris has been able to get newspapers from North Korea and Vietnam which were not available through any other channel. Recently, one of the Paris dealers has developed a contact in Outer Mongolia which promises to supply material heretofore unavailable. Recently, one Washington agency, dissatisfied with the supply of certain types of material from eastern Europe, has asked Paris to expand its activity.

Though the acquisition of publications from foreign countries is an important function, French publications require the major effort of the PPO. To keep abreast of the large and constantly changing publications output of France is by no means easy. Government publications alone constitute a substantial problem and they are a major source of information, not only on France, but on other areas, particularly Africa. The private press of France falls close behind that of Britain in volume, and equals it in diversity. If the press is somewhat less voluminous than that of England, it is also less orderly and not so well documented. It is particularly notable that many specialized but significant

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publications are ignored in the book trade journals; and are mentioned in the "Bibliographie de la France" only after a lapse of months, or in some cases more than a year, if at all. A thorough knowledge of French sources and a constant effort to keep in touch are therefore requisite to the PPO function. Extremely helpful in this process are French contacts in government, academic circles, library circles, and in the book trade itself. Such contacts do not arise spontaneously, but depend upon initiation and cultivation by the PPO, and the supply of publications, bibliographic aid and other services in return.

B. THE SELECTION JOB.

The PPO's knowledge of publications is basic to the effective procurement on his own initiative of publications which have not been ordered. At present, the PPO has selection funds provided by five Washington agencies for the selection of publications following general and specific requirements which cover about 20 pages, and which are supplemented from time to time by requirements to support individual research projects. The procurement of useful publications not known to the Washington agencies is the true test of a PPO's ability, and there is scarcely any limit to the the amount of knowledge and initiative he can use in this function. In this operation, the knowledge of publications is one aspect; the other is knowledge of requirements.

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C. THE REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

An important function of the PPO, Paris is the improvement of the part-time PPO operations in the area of responsibility by guidance to and stimulation of the part-time PO's. The posts assigned to the PPO, Paris are Brussels, The Hague, Lisbon, Madrid and Rome. An annual visit should be made to each post, and each visit should occupy from two to five working days.

Visits to Posts should be made at least once a year. It is desirable that the PPO, Paris should have a good working relationship with the PPO, London.

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In general, the operation of the part-time publications procurement program has not been satisfactory to consumers in Washington. This is not to say that it has not been useful, but in comparison with what the program could produce, the results have been seriously deficient. The response to specific orders and instructions addressed to the part-time PO posts is generally good, but with few exceptions the selection activity is slight and sporadic. The generally ragged performance in these jobs derives reasonably enough from the circumstances in which they operate. The part-time PO always has other assignments of higher priority; he is usually a very junior officer and often new to the post; he seldom has the benefit of instruction from a competent predecessor, or any adequate knowledge of the program; usually he has no knowledge of fiscal procedure; often his knowledge of the language of the host country is deficient, or even lacking entirely. Consequently, this potentially valuable program is dragging badly, and needs direction and stimulation. These can best be given by a person who is: (1) fully acquainted with Washington needs; (2) cognizant of operating problems in the Foreign Service; (3) experienced in bibliography, the book trade, and research materials of all kinds; (4) expert in all phases of procurement in the field. The only person who meets all of these requirements is the full-time PPO. It may be appropriate to add, parenthetically, that the posts under the direction of the PPO, Paris, are, on the average, more active

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than such posts elsewhere, but there is ample room for improvement.

IV. SERVICES TO THE EMBASSY IN PARIS.

PPO, Paris estimate that services to the Embassy in Paris account for about 10% of the total expenditure of funds and about 25% of the total workload of the PPO office. Probably, this disproportion is due largely to the constant availability of the PPO for consultation and procurement action. As a member of the Embassy staff, the PPO is exposed to more individual demands from the Embassy than from Washington, and as the Embassy specialist is expected to solve any problem of publications procurement. The Embassy staff would be the first to feel the loss of the PPO, and other members of the Embassy staff would have to perform bibliographic and procurement work which is now done by the PPO, or do without it.

V. THE SITUATION IN LONDON.

The situation in London differs from that in Paris in numerous details, but the overall responsibilities of the two PPO's are about equal; the principal differences lie in the volume of non-indigenous publications procured in Paris, and in the regional responsibility lodged there. The PPO, London has two local employees, instead of three as at Paris, and geographically is responsible only for the British Isles.

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On the other hand, the total volume of British publication somewhat exceeds that of France. Moreover, there is a larger clientele in Washington for British publications than for French; both book and subscription orders run to higher figures. There is a substantially larger business in annuals. "Annuals" here includes publications issued at intervals up to three years. The annuals include reports of government agencies, research, educational and financial institutions; handbooks and directories of industries, professions and trades. Many are international in scope. The annuals are of prime research and reference value, and at the same time are perhaps the most difficult large category of publications to cover fully. The PPO in London also must be particularly alert for reports issued by and about international organizations, meetings and conferences which are published in English, though the headquarters may be outside of the British Isles, and the meetings may be held anywhere. The PPO must maintain a broad and current knowledge of the activities and publications of numerous private and public organizations, both national and international. London, of course, is a traditional and active center of the international book trade, and therefore many requests are addressed to London for books out-of-print in the country of origin, or unavailable for other reasons. On one occasion, for example, PPO, London was asked to acquire, by microfilming library holdings, if necessary, the

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publications of various British colonies and protectorates on a long list of subjects and over a period of about 10 years. At present, the PPO is engaged in scouring London for dictionaries and grammars of all possible African languages and dialects. In overall terms, the problems of knowing publications and sources, developing and maintaining contacts, and relating available material to Washington requirements are approximately equal to those in Paris. Finally, PPO, London has several individual assignments outside of the field of publications procurement, the most time-consuming of which is biographic reporting for the Embassy.

VI. INTERNAL OPERATION OF THE PUBLICATIONS PROCUREMENT OFFICES.

A. General.

The conclusion of the Inspectors' report which reads, "... it appears that a single officer could give adequate supervision to both of these offices, permitting the abolition of one of the two American positions" clearly implies that the Inspectors regard the PPO positions as primarily supervisory. Such an appraisal takes cognizance neither of the broad scope of knowledge which the PPO should have, nor of the many activities which can be performed only by an American official.

B. Paris. Supervision.

In Paris, the three locals are all experienced. com-

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without supervision, but daily there are decisions and actions which should be taken only by an American official. At present, the PPO is busy eight hours a day and often more; work occupying about one hour per day is of a nature which could be transferred to the local staff. However, the local staff, which for years had been four, was reduced to three in January 1961. Work pressures became severe. The PPO was obliged to do some work that could be done by locals, as noted above. Several time-saving changes in procedure were introduced. Another, which will require procedural change in Washington, is being studied. However, all time of locals which can be saved by procedural improvements will be needed to relieve the PPO of routine work, and to improve certain aspects of the operation, particularly follow-up and reporting. There are two further factors for consideration in the area of supervision. The first is that the work of a publications procurement office consists largely of a multitude of unrelated actions taken for a large number of individual requesters. Though the locals need little instruction in their work, the instruction and review which are necessary can be done properly only by an official who is constantly aware of the business flowing through the office. Therefore, the PPO personally reviews all requests for publications. Such a review is necessary also to determine need for priority action, and to permit the PPO to give explicit instructions or to handle personally cases which otherwise would not be handled properly, and would cause trouble and waste of

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time out of all proportion to their number. The second point with respect to supervision is that it demands the presence of the supervisor. If an American official were in the office only half time, there can be no doubt that the pace of work would suffer. The local staff in Paris is extraordinarily good; nevertheless, it needs the instruction, review and stimulus of a full-time PPO. Even the full-time officer is necessarily often absent from the office because of selection and contact work, regional travel, vacations and home leave.

C. London. Supervision.

The situation in London is different in several respects from that of Paris. Since the local staff consists of only two, the PPO necessarily does a higher proportion of the total work of the office. Moreover, the senior local in London is not as capable as the senior local in Paris, and requires more instruction and review. Basically, however, the situation is the same in that the locals need regular supervision, and there is little work that could be transferred from the PPO to them.

VII. SUMMARY.

A. Supervision.

In both London and Paris, the supervision of local employees is now at the minimum consistent with efficient operation.

~~B. Transfer of Work from PPO to Local Employees.~~

Reduction in supervision would result in a reduction in the output of the locals.

B. Transfer of Work from PPO to Local Employees.

In Paris, the workload of the PPO which could be properly transferred to local employees is about one hour per day; in London, it is about the same. Transfer of any considerable additional functions or responsibility to the local staffs would result in unsatisfactory performance.

C. Personal Work of the PPO.

In both London and Paris, the PPO has a full individual workload. Any time which can be saved by transfer of work to locals should be applied to professional work. In both Paris and London, there is a possibility of transferring certain tasks to other American personnel. In Paris, the Inspectors have recommended that responsibility for the ^{control} ~~management~~ in the Embassy of NIS and INR materials should be transferred from the PPO to the Central Files Unit, and that some responsibility, particularly personal contact, needed in the CERP program should be transferred to the Commercial Section. However, if effected, these changes would save the PPO less than one hour per day, on the average. In London, the PPO has a considerable burden of duties not an inherent part of the PPO function, but even if all were to be transferred to other American personnel, the PPO could very well use all of the time gained in the full performance of the basic

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VIII. CONCLUSION.

Beth in Paris and London, the publications procurement function is a full-time assignment. No individual could maintain, the body of knowledge required, do the essential individual work, properly supervise the two staffs, and perform the necessary travel. Elimination of one of these positions inevitably would reduce services available to the two embassies and to other posts, and would make it impossible for the PPO to meet the requirements of the Department and other agencies in Washington.

Harold M. Swift

Acting Publications Procurement Officer
Paris

*Coordinator for Western Europe,
INR/CS/FP*

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